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Managing Big Cities

Proud to Be Pride: A Discourse Analysis of the  
Presentation of Diversity on City Websites

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## Abstract

City-branding strategies today often stress ideas and stereotypes of culture and creativity. As urban managers increasingly focus on establishing cities as brands to position them at home and abroad (Saez et al 2013), a city's official website becomes an important tool for brand construction and communication. In this paper we set out to study if and how diversity, here represented by gay friendliness, constitutes a component in creative branding of cities. The study is based on discourse analysis of material presented on official city websites of the five Northern European capitals. Our focus on gayness as an example of diversity shows that the topic is used in different ways in the communication of the city websites included in the study. While these cities might be seen as culturally similar, there are differences in how they present themselves regarding gayness. The results demonstrate a variation in the display of diversity both in terms of the character of the language used and in terms of the amount of information posted.



## Background

In the last few decades, economic globalization with its free flow of people, capital, technology, services and goods, has caused increased competition between different places (Florian 2002). In a competitive global market city branding is gaining in importance for cities aiming to keep up in the competition for capital, investment, and people. As a strategic instrument to publicize a city's competitive advantages (Zhang & Zhao 2009) city branding is used to associate a place with wider desirable qualities in the eyes of relevant target audiences (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). City-branding strategies today often stress ideas and stereotypes of culture and creativity (Vanolo 2008). In line with an overall shift from a technology-driven to a creative paradigm, the cultural identity of a city has become a factor for competition and competitiveness.

As urban managers increasingly focus on establishing cities as brands to position them at home and abroad (Saez et al 2013), a city's official website becomes an important tool for brand construction and communication. In spite of the significant advantages of official websites (accessibility of information, provision of relevant information, handling of complaints, low cost, and customer service) very little research has been made on the role of websites in urban management (Saez et al 2013). Hence more insight into the role of websites in urban management is needed.

## Aim and purpose

In this article we set out to study if and how diversity, here represented by gay friendliness, constitutes a component in creative branding of cities. The study is based on discourse analysis of material presented on official city websites. The study is limited to the official websites of five Northern European capitals: Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, Reykjavik and Helsinki.

## Theoretical framework

The emergence of creativity as a central category in city branding and planning is largely attributable to Florida's creative capital perspective launched in the widely popular book *Cities and the Creative Class* (2005). Having been popularized by Florida (2002, 2003, 2005) and other researchers, the idea of the "creative city" in the early 2000s was incorporated into city planning and urban-marketing policies around the world (Florida 2002, Landry & Bianchini 1995, Zimmerman 2008). According to this theory, creative people – constituting the "creative class" – are the driving force in regional economic growth. Members of the "creative class" base their location decisions on the degree to which places exhibit creativity, tolerance, excitement, innovation, inclusion, and openness to all kinds of diversity. To attract these economic front-runners cities must portray themselves

as possessing creative qualities. Using creativity as a central hub we set out to analyze the content of some city branding websites. For its impact on academics and policy makers alike we deem creativity a relevant and useful concept to use as our starting point. Employing Vanolo's construction of a creative brand (2008, 377) we focus on the general idea of diversity – and on how this idea is communicated through different components: visual and physical elements, slogans and narratives, and events. Drawing on Bell's and Binnie's assertion of gayness as cultural capital that is used to attract members of the creative class (Bell & Binnie 2004) our study focuses on (re)presentations of gay friendliness as a measure of diversity.

## Method

The website content analyzed in this study was retrieved from the official city websites of Stockholm, Copenhagen, Oslo, Reykjavik and Helsinki January 20<sup>th</sup> 2014. From the chosen websites content pertaining to gay friendliness was extracted. The material was retrieved from the English versions of the respective websites and the quotes appearing in this article have not been translated or modified.

The collected material was analysed using discourse analysis. Discourses are socially constructed systems of meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 21). As fixations of meaning in a given social, cultural and historical context (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) discourses are always transitory and incomplete. At a given time and in a specific social and/or cultural context, they take a particular form, but that form could have been – and can become – different. Discourse analysis lends itself to social constructionist studies of identity, values, ideology and norms as it emphasizes the contingency of the social world and helps deconstruct taken-for-granted meanings and assumptions. In the analysis, Vanolo's construction of a creative brand is employed.

## Results

In this section we present the content of the five studied websites according to Vanolo's three basic concepts: visual and physical elements, slogans and narratives, and events. Concluding the result section is a table summarizing our findings.

### Stockholm

#### *Visual and physical elements*

Stockholm's official website [visitsstockholm.com](http://visitsstockholm.com) offers comprehensive coverage relevant to the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community and others interested in learning about Stockholm as a LGBT city. The link "Gay & Lesbian Stockholm" directs you to a page containing a general introduction.

From this page the blog “Gay & Lesbian Stockholm. A blog about Stockholm” is accessed. The blog is where most of the GLBT related information is located. Apart from regular posts about current places to go or things to do or see (one item posted on average every three days) the blog contains the following main headings; “hotels”, “gay guide”, “lesbian guide”, “shopping guide”, “rainbow offers”, “videos” and “about us”. The blog is also home to two elaborate city guides: a gay guide and a lesbian guide. These provide the most comprehensive coverage of GLBT places to go, things to do and see, and places to stay. The tone and language of the gay guide is different to that of the lesbian guide. While the latter is more subdued the former is more extravagant, focusing on Stockholm being “fab”. The lesbian guide drops references to Lisbeth Salander while the gay guide focuses on the Abba museum. Exaggerations are more likely to be found in the gay guide than in its more understated lesbian equivalent. According to the gay guide “We have had marriage equality for years”. According to the lesbian guide it has been around “since 2009”.

The visual elements prevalent in the two guides include images of two women on a bed, holding hands and looking into each other’s eyes. One of the women is dark-skinned with short dark hair and tattoos and the other woman is fair-skinned with long blond hair. This couple models all the photos in the lesbian guide. Another photo of the same two women embodies a quote in the text that says that hotel staff in Stockholm won’t “bat an eye” at two women “snuggling up together in the lounge for cocktails”. In the gay guide the same idea is observed – one couple representing the gay theme throughout. In one of the images two men on a bed are holding champagne glasses and looking into each other’s eyes. One man is visibly younger than the other man. In the choice of models depicting gay and lesbian relationships diversity is portrayed not only in relation to sexual orientation but also pertaining to ethnicity and age.

### *Slogans and narratives*

“Open” and “welcoming” are commonly used words in the portrayal of Stockholm’s social climate. To support this claim practical examples of the Stockholm attitude are offered: “Hotels in Stockholm are as welcoming as the city they’re in, and staff won’t bat an eye at two women requesting one bed, or snuggling up together in the lounge for cocktails.” According to the website the gay friendliness is not limited to a particular part of town. Instead it is stated that “you’ll find our gayness all over town – in a city as open as this, there’s never been a need for just one segregated gayboorhood. It’s been said that if ever there was a capital designed by gay people for gay people, Stockholm is it.”

While the words tolerance and acceptance are markedly absent, welcoming is frequently used to signify Stockholm’s openness. In the only sentence containing the word acceptance the term is used to position Stockholm as a city where mere



acceptance is not deemed sufficient: “Feel free to hold your girlfriend’s hand while you explore the city – it’s not just accepted, but celebrated.”

### *Events*

Sorted under events are historical events and landmarks pertaining to gay civil rights and public policy. Marriage equality is one such theme brought up in both the gay guide and the lesbian guide. ““The city has been welcoming lesbian brides into its churches since 2009”.

Events also include current happenings, annual events such as Stockholm Pride (that prides itself by being “the largest Pride celebration in Scandinavia”), and international gay events held in Stockholm such as Europride and Eurogames.

“Stockholm has twice hosted Europride, and we’ll soon welcome the Eurogames.”

To further bring home the message of openness the reader learns that in Sweden even royalty takes an active stance for gay rights:

“...our future queen, the radiant Crown Princess Victoria, recently gave out the award for Gay of the Year.”

## Copenhagen

### *Visual and physical elements*

Through the main page of the Copenhagen website you access the “Guide to LGBT Copenhagen”.

Under the heading “Gayer than gay” the visitor learns that “Denmark has always been in the lead when it has come down to passing laws to secure equality for gay men and lesbians.”

The laid-back attitude is attributed to the local residents as the readers are ascertained that “Copenhageners are open-minded, relaxed and tolerant people, and the capital city has long been a playground for both gay Danes and tourists. Here you can be free, open and most of all yourself.” Prospective visitors are promised a “laid-back city” where “attitudes towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons are liberal and open-minded”.

The image of Copenhagen as a city open to diversity is further underpinned by a series of articles about local residents representing the LGBT community. A lesbian rainbow family, a gay man, a transgender person, and a bisexual woman offer their take on life in Copenhagen. These stories echo many of the key words in the general text – confirming Copenhagen as an open place where one can be oneself. The stories entail mostly praise – working as a testament to the city’s diversity – but also things the interviewees would like to improve. A 22-year old gay man enthusiastically states, “there is a great diversity in the people here”. Readers learn that he is open about his sexuality and has no qualms kissing or

holding hands with another man in public. He does however admit to having encountered some problems; being yelled at and once having been thrown out of a bar for kissing another man. The lesbian couple with a three-year-old daughter describes Copenhagen as “openminded and free” claiming “Copenhagen is good at promoting and encouraging diversity in the city”. The couple likes the city’s diverse neighborhoods, of which “multicultural Nørrebro” is mentioned as an example. The couple testifies that they have never experienced discrimination based on their sexuality. “I never think about the fact that we are lesbians. Not even if we kiss or hold hands in public,” states one of the women. “The fact that I never even stop to think about it just shows me how diverse the city really is.” Many new places and initiatives they explain are about being inclusive rather than being gay, something that they applaud. “I don’t feel the need to celebrate the fact that we are lesbians. Instead I’d like to celebrate the diversity in people.” A 56-year-old transgendered woman is somewhat more cautious than the rest of the interviewees, stressing the “need to be more progressive, so we can move forward”. While she fears that Denmark has fallen behind with regard to transgender issues she considers it to be a safe place for transgendered people. Copenhagen “embraces all sorts of minorities” she says adding that the city is “a place where I can be myself”. Finally a bisexual woman establishes the image of Copenhagen as a creative and diverse place.

The word inclusive reappears throughout the portraits. A city for everyone, the celebration of diversity and a creative environment are other themes that keep coming up in the articles.

A slide show includes documentary photography of a pride parade with rainbow flags, girls holding flags, men dressed in white underwear with a bunny tail attached, a drag queen. Studio photography of two women kissing deviates in style from the other photos included.

### *Slogans and narratives*

The Copenhagen website offers both slogans and narratives to describe the local attitude towards gay people. A slogan used by World Outgames held in Copenhagen in 2009 - “Love of freedom. Freedom to love.” - serves to capture the communicated atmosphere. According to the presentation this statement “has never rung truer in Copenhagen than today”.

To further add to this statement the text declares that Copenhagen is characterized by a fundamental liberal view:

Copenhagen is a beautiful and laid-back city, and attitudes towards gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons are liberal and open-minded. Members of the LGBT community tend to mix more freely here than in so many other large cities around the world.

## *Events*

Under this heading both historic and current events facilitate the image of Copenhagen as a place open to diversity. Public policy landmarks are lined up according to year:

In 1989 Denmark was the first country in the world to recognise registered partnerships for same-sex couples.

In 2009 it became possible for registered gay couples to adopt children.

In 2012 it became possible for gay people to be married in church.

The civil rights developments appear alongside quirky historic events that further help to portray Copenhagen as a city of openness and diversity with freedom of association and later civil partnership rights afforded to gays and lesbians.

Danes Eigil and Axel Axgil were the first couple in the world to enter into a registered same-sex partnership in 1989 after 40 years of being engaged.

The National Association for Gays and Lesbians (LGBT Denmark) was founded by Axel Axgil in 1948 as the first of its kind in the world.

Diversity as a principle embraced by top politicians is communicated through examples of politicians who have joined the Pride parade.

Denmark's Prime Minister Helle Thorning Schmidt and Lord Mayor of Copenhagen Frank Jensen participated in Copenhagen Pride parade in 2012.

Past and current national and international gay events complete the tale of Copenhagen as a diverse city. The reader learns that Copenhagen hosted the World Outgames in 2009 and that the city is host to an annual Pride festival.

...once a year, during the month of August, Copenhageners tend to forget their own moderate nature and show their pride during Copenhagen Pride. The pride parade moves through Copenhagen city centre and ends on City Hall Square, renamed Pride Square on the occasion.

## *Oslo*

### *Visual and physical elements*

The gay section of the Oslo website is reached through a link under the heading "Your Oslo" in a column on the main page. The link "Gay Oslo" appears alongside six other links catering to different categories of Oslo visitors, among them "Oslo with children", "Oslo on a budget", "Green Oslo", and "Oslo for all". Once on the "Gay Oslo" section the visitor is greeted by a slide show containing four images. The images reflect the focus on nightlife and on the Pride parade prevalent in the text on the gay section of the website. Following the

pattern of the Oslo website as a whole, its gay section is short, concise and focused on delivering information about things to do and see while in Oslo. Consisting of only one main page with some links, Oslo's gay theme is not developed to the same extent as those of Copenhagen and Stockholm.

### *Slogans and narratives*

The slogans and narratives are in keeping with the rest of the Oslo website, i.e. not very elaborate. Slogans are limited to the heading "Gay Oslo" while narratives focus largely on Oslo's lively gay scene and the overall liberal attitudes held by Norwegians. The city's case for diversity largely rests on the mentioning of public gay figures within politics, business, sports, and entertainment as well as of the occurrence of an "open and lively gay scene".

Oslo has nightlife, shopping, restaurants, great nature and a varied culture programme, in addition to an open and lively gay scene.

The Norwegian society is, generally speaking, liberal towards the gay community. Norway has several gay public figures, in entertainment and sports as well as in politics and business. In fact, both the former Minister of Finance and the former chairman of Oslo's city council are openly gay.

### *Events*

Focusing on nightlife, bars and clubs, and on a calendar covering gay events, Oslo's event element stands out relative many of the other capitals with their emphasis on history, civil rights and public policy legislation.

## Reykjavik

### *Visual and physical elements*

The gay section of the Reykjavik website is reached through its main page under the heading "Gay Reykjavik" by an image of a drag queen in a purple wig. The Reykjavik claim to diversity focuses on its proclaimed history in terms of progressive LGBT views and legislation. The legal status of LGBT people and mentioning of family policy issues (marriage equality, the right to be tried for adoption etc.) contribute to the presentation of Reykjavik as a progressive and diverse city. The diversity issue is framed as a civil rights issue.

Images consist of a photo of a drag queen with purple hair and a tiara and a photo of a woman, seen from behind, with rainbow colored flags in her blond hair.

### *Slogans and narratives*

Reykjavik's pitch is largely centered around the city as a place of equal rights and pride. The LGBT initialism is used throughout to signify awareness and inclusion extending beyond the division of gays and lesbians.

Reykjavik is very proud of its LGBT community and has become quite the beacon of rainbow coloured light in the past few years. Apart from being the first country in the world to elect an openly gay head of state, all LGBT people in Iceland enjoy the same rights as everyone else regardless of their sexual orientation, including the right to marry. Reykjavik is also home to the award winning travel service Pink Iceland - a company devoted to the travel needs of LGBT guests - and has a great number of gay-friendly hotels, bars and nightclubs.

### *Events*

The Reykjavik website puts a considerable emphasis on legislative issues and public policy, stating that:

The legal status of LGBT people in Iceland is one of the best in the world and the rights of the individual are protected in the country's constitution, with registered partnership for same-sex couples becoming legal in 1996.

The text goes on to mention family policy landmarks such as same-sex marriage and the rights of same-sex couples to adopt and get access to assisted fertilization.

In the year 2008 same-sex couples could register their partnership in church or other religious congregation as well as with a civil registrar. Iceland was the ninth country in the world to allow same-sex marriage and discrimination is prohibited by Article 65 of the Constitution, which stipulates clearly that everyone is to be equal before the law and enjoy their human rights regardless of 'sex, religion, opinion, national origin, race, colour, property, birth or other status.' The rights of married same-sex couples to adopt children are in all respects the same as for heterosexual married couples, should they fulfill those conditions that apply for the adoption of children. Lesbians who are married or cohabiting have the same rights to assisted fertilization as heterosexual women who are married or cohabiting.

In addition to past events of legislative stature the Reykjavik website brings forward current events, mainly its Gay Pride festival.

Reykjavik city is extremely proud of its fabulous Gay Pride festivities, which have been putting a spectacular sparkle in the month of August ever since its first outing in the year 1999. A huge, merry and colourful Gay flotilla parades through the centre of town followed by grand outdoor concert attended by over one hundred thousand people – lesbians and gay men, bisexuals and transgender people, friends, relatives, fellow citizens and numerous foreign visitors – all showing solidarity with the gay cause on the second weekend of August every year!

## Helsinki

### *Visual and physical elements*

“GLBT friendly” is found as one of ten alternative links under the heading “I want to experience Helsinki” on the main page of the *visithelsinki* website. Clicking on the link you reach the gay friendly section of the website. This section consists of one main page with links redirecting the visitor to external websites. In addition, the page offers five website internal links: “LGBT news and offers”, “Gay restaurant and bars”, “Gay Friendly Shopping”, “Gay Friendly Hotels in Helsinki”, “Gay Friendly Tour Operators”. Four of these can be accessed through links under the heading “related articles”. The “Gay friendly news and offers” article amounts to the following text: “Here you’ll find the latest offers and news from the Gay friendly Helsinki network”, followed by links to relevant companies. The “Gay restaurant and bars in Helsinki” is equally short: “Helsinki has an open and active gay culture. Gay restaurants can be found all the way from the city centre to the Kallio district. Cafés, nightclubs, clubs and pubs also host fun activities from stand-up routines to bingo” as is the article about “Gay friendly hotels in Helsinki”, simply stating that “The companies listed below belong to the Gay Friendly Helsinki network that was initiated by the Helsinki City Tourist & Convention Bureau in March 2009”. Under the “Gay friendly shopping” heading is a list containing just one shop. “The Gay Friendly Tour Operator” article is somewhat longer with information about the company “Strömma Finland Oy Ab / Helsinki Expert” listed there.

Gay friendliness on the Helsinki website is largely depicted as a function of meeting formal qualification requirements, with membership in the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) and the provision of “Gay Comfort training” as key components in the presentation of Helsinki as a diverse city. Playing a prominent part in Helsinki’s gay friendliness rhetoric formal memberships are brought forward in several contexts.

Helsinki is a member of the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA).

Since 2009 the Gay Friendly Helsinki network has brought together local companies that are dedicated to providing high quality services for LGBT visitors. All participating companies have received special Gay Comfort training.

### *Slogans and narratives*

While most of the other Scandinavian capitals proclaim themselves “gay”, Helsinki presents itself as “gay friendly Helsinki”. The text is kept short and general and the tone is cautious with frequent references to meeting formal diversity requirements.

The portrayal of gay friendliness is linked to a general aim of enabling “all visitors to Helsinki to enjoy our tolerant, active and friendly atmosphere”.

Unlike some of the other capitals, which use words as open and welcoming, Helsinki uses the word tolerant to describe the city’s stance. In line with most of the other websites Helsinki attributes its atmosphere to its local residents:

Helsinki is famous for its design, architecture and high technology. But what makes the city really special is its nice, friendly and easily approachable local residents.

### *Events*

Helsinki’s gay friendliness marketing focuses on future events. Past events, related to legislation and public policy, are not mentioned.

Helsinki hosts EuroGames 2016

Helsinki has been chosen to be the host city for the international EuroGames 2016 with a slogan ‘Equal together - strong together’. The event will be hosted by the Finnish gay and lesbian sport club HOT Helsinki.

Helsinki opts for a factual and neutral tone, devoted to conveying facts such as the assignment of the EuroGames to Helsinki and the scope and dates of the Eurogames.

The decision to appoint the games to Helsinki was made unanimously by the EGLSF, European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation in its annual assembly in Antwerp in the beginning of March. In addition, Stockholm was chosen to host the EuroGames 2015. The event has never taken place in Scandinavia apart from the EuroGames organized in Copenhagen in 2003.

EuroGames, the European Gay & Lesbian Sports Championships, is the biggest sports event for the LGBTI people in Europe. The EuroGames 2016 event will be held in Helsinki from 29th of June to 2nd of July 2016.

Tying in with Helsinki’s previously proclaimed “active” atmosphere is the mentioning of sport associations geared towards LGBT-people, on a national as well as on a European level:

The European Gay & Lesbian Sport Federation is a network that covers around 120 sport clubs from over 20 different European countries.

HOT Helsinki is a Finnish gay and lesbian sport club founded in 1997. The club represents all the Finnish gay and lesbian sport groups and has over 350 members. HOT Helsinki is a member of the EGLSF.

### Summary of results

The below table summarizes the result of the discourse analysis of the city websites. The studied cities are plotted on the vertical axis while Vanolo’s components appear on the horizontal axis.

Table 1. Nordic European Capitals' websites in relation to gayness based on Vanolo's components.

1

GENERAL IDEA: Diversity				
<div>Components</div> <div>City</div>		Visual and physical elements	Slogans and narrations	Events
Stockholm		Blog Gay guide Lesbian guide Images of rainbow flags, same sex couples holding hands, looking into each other's eyes, "snuggle over cocktails"	"welcoming" "open"	Europride Eurogames 2015 Stockholm Pride Future queen handing out the gay of the year award Church wedding since 2009
Copenhagen		Interviews with local members of the LGBT-community Many public figures openly gay	"gayer than gay" "liberal and open-minded" "open-minded, relaxed and tolerant" "laid-back" "you can be free, open and most of all yourself" "Love of freedom. Freedom to love"	World Outgames 2009 Copenhagen Pride 1989 DK 1 <sup>st</sup> country to recognize same-sex registered partnerships 2009 possible to adopt children 2012 possible to be married in church
Oslo		"gay public figures, in entertainment and sports as well as in politics and business" "an open and lively gay scene"	"Gay Oslo" "liberal"	Oslo Gay Pride EuroPride 2014
Reykjavik		Image of drag queen in purple wig. Image of the back of a woman's head with a rainbow coloured cap and rainbow flags.	"beacon of rainbow coloured light" "proud of its LGBT community"	Reykjavik Pride 1 <sup>st</sup> country to elect an openly gay head of state LGBT people enjoy same rights as straight people in terms of marrying, adopting children, assisted fertilization
Helsinki		Gay friendly Helsinki network "member of the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)"	"tolerant, active and friendly atmosphere"	Eurogames 2016



## Discussion

The discourse analysis of the five Northern European capitals shows that even though these cities are located in countries with similar cultures and, to some extent, historical bounds, they seem to present and handle gayness and gay friendliness somewhat differently. Following Vanolo's categorization of creativity brands we here discuss how such differences, and similarities, can be understood.

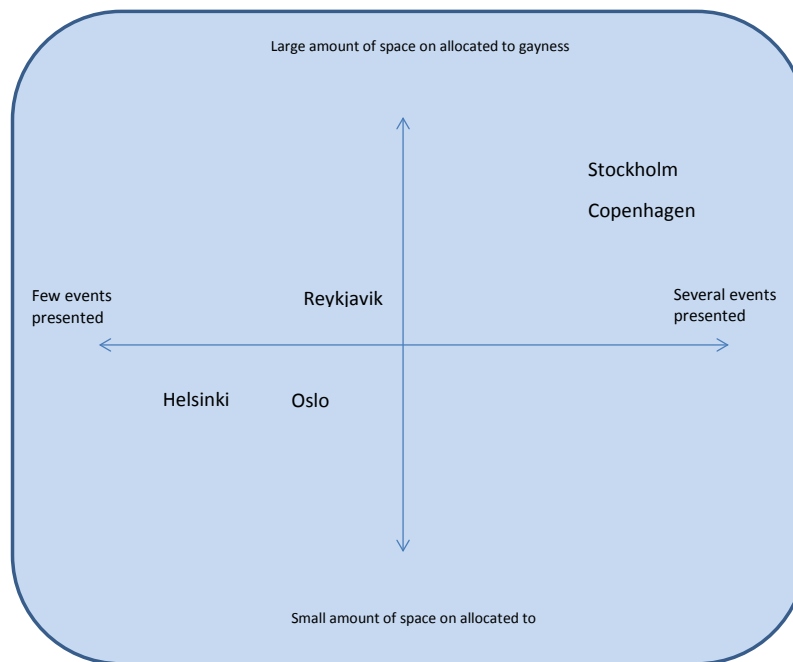
As presented earlier, Vanolo (2008) suggests that creativity can be grouped into three main categories. Based on the empirical results presented in the table above, we will here discuss the five city websites according to these categories. Starting with visual and physical elements there is a noticeable variation. Norway and Finland, relative to Reykjavik, Stockholm and Copenhagen, have more limited space deposited for gay themes on their websites. In particular Stockholm and Copenhagen have a considerable amount of space allocated to these topics. Also, pictures are presented and commented on. These often show drag queens and rainbow flags i.e. rather conventional indicators of gayness. In the case of Stockholm we note a division of homosexuals into lesbians and gays when it comes to 'what to do' dimensions of the city. Visitors are thus given a predetermined interest orientation based on gender and sexual orientation categorizations. In addition to sexual orientation the visual elements on the Stockholm website convey dimensions of diversity related to age and ethnicity.

Moving on to events, all the websites integrate gay activities in the presentations of their cities. However the cities exhibit differences in terms of the sort of events they choose to draw attention to. While Helsinki's examples are limited to future events, mainly the Helsinki hosting of the international event the Eurogames in 2016, other cities exhibit a range of past, present and future events to validate their diversity claim. Stockholm, Copenhagen and Reykjavik share the listing of historical legislative events of importance to the gay movement, thereby linking gay friendliness to history and attaching it to the national discourse. The provision of civil rights (such as same-sex marriage, marriage in church, legal rights, adoption, and insemination) is used to support the notion of gay friendliness as part of a longstanding progressive value system. Among the present and future events advertised, the local Pride festivals along with the international Europride festival are the ones typically mentioned.

Finally, regarding slogans and narrations, the depiction of gay friendliness as part of an inherent national and local character is one shared by several of the studied city websites. Reykjavik's statement of being a "beacon of rainbow colored light" is just one of many ways in which gay friendliness is appropriated by the studied websites as something specific for their part of the world. Several of the cities share a vocabulary where words like openness and proud frequently occur.

To sum up, Vanolo's concept of creativity and its three categories have helped us to discuss similarities and differences in how diversity can be employed as part of city or urban branding. As highlighted by Florida, creativity may be an important dimension of city management of today and here we have limited our discussion to one feature that can be seen as an indicator of creativity; gayness. As pointed out by Saez et al (2013) branding is important for cities of today, however, research focusing on city websites remains sparse. Our focus on gayness as an example of diversity shows that the topic is used in different ways in the communication of the city websites included in the study. While these cities might be seen as culturally similar, there are differences in how they present themselves regarding gayness. The results demonstrate a variation in the display of diversity both in terms of the character of the language used and in terms of the amount of information posted. The depiction of gay friendliness as part of an inherent national and local character is one shared by several of the studied city websites. In Copenhagen the Danish disposition is expressed as "liberal and open-minded" while "humble" and "moderate". In Stockholm the disposition is labeled "welcoming" and "open" whereas Helsinki describes a "tolerant, active and friendly" mentality expressed in the local residents being "nice, friendly and easily approachable". Embracing diversity is depicted as an inherent character trait in which gay friendliness constitutes a component. Openness is communicated as a fundamental element of the national mentality and as part of a Scandinavian disposition. This is true also for those cities that, like Reykjavik, choose to focus on legislation and public policy thereby attributing a progressive stance to the culture rather than to individuals. In both cases progressiveness and liberalism are claimed as part of the national discourse – be it communicated as national character or national culture. Diversity and progressive views are portrayed as central to the national identity and self-image. Copenhagen, Stockholm and Reykjavik, albeit in different ways, all incorporate diversity as an important part of their self and their identity.

The differences in language can be seen as an indicator of the mindset of the city management in relation to gayness. The differences in the amount of information or space allocated to this topic can be seen as an indicator of the extent to which the cities want to reach various groups of visitors or to what extent having gayness activities, such as pride events, can be seen as part of the city and its traditions. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the connection between city branding practices and the content of the websites. Here we can only discuss variations in the content of the websites, not the practices behind the city presentations. In the picture below we summarize the study by plotting the five cities in a diagram which visualizes the city websites according to a) the space deposited to the gayness topic (pictures, length of texts) and b) the amount of events that are presented in relation to gayness (both city events and national legal events).



*Figure 1.* A discourse analysis based on Vanolo's concept of creativity brand, showing the Nordic European Capitals' websites in relation to gayness as part of a creativity brand.

Further research might help us gain insight into the strategy work behind these texts, in turn increasing our understanding of similarities and differences between the websites identified in this study.

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